

Papers Relating to the Imperial War Conference, 1917.

[42]

Paraphrase of Telegram from Mr. Long to the Governor General.

LONDON, December 20, 1916.

Canadian Government will have received through Reuters full report of Prime Minister's statement respecting summoning of Conference. Your Ministers will doubtless concur as to the desirability of this as soon as practicable. The state of public business in some of the Dominions I realize may be a difficulty, and I should be glad to have early expression of your Ministers' views as to the date on which it would be possible for representatives of Canadian Government to attend, and also as to the questions which they would suggest for discussion with a view of attaining the objects indicated by the Prime Minister.

After collecting views of all Dominions I will communicate with you further.

LONG.

Extract from a Report of the Right Honourable Lloyd George's Speech of the 19th of December, 1916, in the House of Commons.

AN IMPERIAL WAR CONFERENCE.

"Now coming to the Dominions, the Ministers have repeatedly acknowledged the splendid assistance which the Dominions have given of their own free will to the Old Country in its championship of the cause of humanity. They have recognized that our fight is not a selfish one, that it is not merely a European quarrel, and that there were great world issues which their children were as concerned in as ours. The new Administration is just as full of gratitude as the old for the superb valour which our kinsmen have shown in so many striking fields, but I want to say that we feel that the time has come when the Dominions ought to be more formally consulted as to the progress and course of the war, as to the steps that ought to be taken to secure victory, and as to the business methods of garnering its fruits.

"We propose, therefore, at an early date, to summon an Imperial Conference to place the whole position before the Dominions, to take counsel with them as to what further action we can take together in order to achieve an early and complete triumph for the ideals which they share with us."

Paraphrase of Telegram from Mr. Long to the Governor General.

LONDON, December 25, 1916.

I wish to explain that what is contemplated by His Majesty's Government is not a session of the ordinary Imperial Conference but a special War Conference of

7 GEORGE V, A. 1917

the Empire. His Majesty's Government therefore invite your Prime Minister to attend a series of special and continuous meetings of the War Cabinet in order to consider urgent questions affecting prosecution of the war, the possible conditions on which in agreement with our Allies we could assent to its termination, and the problems which will then immediately arise.

Your Prime Minister, for the purpose of these meetings, would be a member of the War Cabinet.

In view of the extreme urgency of the subjects of discussion, as well as of their supreme importance, it is hoped that your Prime Minister may find it possible, in spite of serious inconvenience involved, to attend at an early date, not later than end of February. While the presence of your Prime Minister himself is earnestly desired by His Majesty's Government, they hope that if he sees insuperable difficulties, he will carefully consider the question of nominating a substitute, as they would regard it as a serious misfortune if any Dominions were left unrepresented.

Please make arrangements to publish this on Wednesday morning as it will be published here at that time.

LONG.

Paraphrase of Telegram from Mr. Long to the Governor General.

LONDON, January 1, 1917.

I would like to make it clear that if your Prime Minister desires the presence at War Cabinet of colleagues of whose special knowledge he wishes to avail himself the latter will be welcome, though the Prime Minister alone, of course, will be a member of War Cabinet. Further, if your Ministers should desire to discuss other questions of common interest not directly affecting the conduct of the war, or less appropriate for discussion at War Cabinet, His Majesty's Government are prepared to arrange facilities for conferring on any other questions that await decision between Dominions and Imperial Government, although it may not be possible for the Prime Minister to preside.

LONG.

Paraphrase of Cypher Telegram from His Excellency the Governor General to the Colonial Secretary.

OTTAWA, ONT., January 5, 1917.

My Prime Minister and his colleagues have taken into earnest consideration the very important announcement set forth in your telegram of 25th December, which has since been made public. He and his colleagues concur in the view that it is his duty to attend this Conference without regard to any difficulties here which his absence may occasion. With that view Parliament has been summoned for the 18th instant in order that business may be facilitated and advanced as much as possible before his departure. He would greatly appreciate information of a more definite character as to the questions to be considered especially those touching the prosecution of the war and conditions of peace so far as they have been considered. He would also be grateful for earliest possible information as to latest date to which he may delay his departure for England and as to probable length of proposed series of meetings if that has been considered.

DEVONSHIRE.